

**Early Introduction of Solid Foods****Definition/  
cut-off value**


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Addition of solid food(s) into the daily diet before four (<4) months of age.

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**Participant  
category and  
priority level****Category**

Infants

**Priority**

IV

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**Justification**

Before 4 months of age, the infant possesses an extrusion reflex that enables him/her to swallow only liquid foods. Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula is all the infant needs.

Gastric secretions, digestive capacity, renal capacity and enzymatic secretions are low, which makes digestion of solids inefficient and potentially harmful. Furthermore, there is the potential for antigens to be developed against solid foods, due to the undigested proteins that may permeate the gut.

If solid foods are introduced before the infant is developmentally ready, breast milk or iron-fortified formula necessary for optimum growth is displaced.

Around 4 months of age, the infant is developmentally ready for solid foods when:

- C the infant is better able to express certain feeding cues such as turning head to indicate satiation;
  - C oral and gross motor skills begin to develop that help the infant to take solid foods;
  - C the extrusion reflex disappears; and
  - C the infant begins to sit upright and maintain balance.
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**Clarifications/  
Guidelines**

Before assigning this risk code, be sure to document which food or foods have been introduced before 4 months of age on the diet/health history form.

If early introduction of solid foods (e.g., adding cereal to the bottle) was directed by a physician, assign the risk code, but do not counsel on or contradict the instructions from the health care provider.

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**References**

1. Rolfes, DeBruyne, Whitney: Life Span Nutrition: Conception Through Life; 1990; pp. 231-237.
  2. Fomon, S.: Nutrition of Normal Infants; 1993; pp. 457-458.
  3. Queen and Lang: Handbook of Pediatric Nutrition; 1993; pp. 129-131.
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**References (cont)**

4. AAP, CON: Pediatric Nutrition Handbook; 1993; pp. 23-28.
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